

2013 STATE OF THE PARISH ADDRESS

THIS IS THE TENTH YEAR I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF REVIEWING WITH YOU THE STATE OF OUR COMMUNITY. IT HAS BEEN A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN THE REALITIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN A TRUTHFUL AND DOWN TO EARTH WAY. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I HAVE LEARNED AN AWFUL LOT, AND CONTINUE TO DO SO, IT TRULY IS A COMPLEX WORLD.

BUT, LET'S START BY TALKING ABOUT WHERE YOU ARE. YOU ARE IN THE BEST FOOD CITY IN AMERICA AND THE TASTIEST CITY IN THE SOUTH! FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL WAS NAMED BEST MUSIC FESTIVAL.

WE HAVE THE LOWEST UNEMPLOYMENT IN LOUISIANA, AND ARE THE 16TH LOWEST IN AMERICA!

YOU ARE ALSO IN THE SIXTH FASTEST GROWING ECONOMY IN AMERICA TODAY. WE HAVE THE SIXTH FASTEST GROWING MIDDLE CLASS IN AMERICA. WE HAD THE LARGEST EMPLOYMENT INCREASE, WE ARE THE BEST JOB MARKET, AND ARE FASTEST GROWING METRO.

#1 MID-SIZE CITY FOR JOB GROWTH...4TH IN ALL CITIES OF ANY SIZE. WE ARE, OF COURSE, THE 2ND MOST OPTIMISTIC CITY IN AMERICA. WE ALSO HAVE THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN AMERICA. THAT WAS JUST SOME OF OUR HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2012.

2013 IS OFF TO A GREAT START AS WELL. THE MILKEN INSTITUTE JUST NAMED THE TOP 200 PERFORMING CITIES, AND LAFAYETTE MOVED UP 69 PLACES TO RANK #24 IN THE NATION, IN PART BECAUSE OF OUR JOB GROWTH AND WAGE GROWTH.

BY THE WAY, THAT PUTS US AS MILKEN'S TOP RANKED LOUISIANA CITY!

I'D SAY LAFAYETTE HAS MOMENTUM, PLEASE DON'T TAKE IT FOR GRANTED!

AND, WHY ALL THE ACCOLADES? BECAUSE OF THE POLITICIANS, OF COURSE!

OF COURSE ITS NOT, BUT YOU ALL KNOW THAT POLITICS AND YES, POLITICIANS MAKE A DIFFERENCE. IF YOU DIDN'T THINK POLITICIANS MADE A DIFFERENCE, YOU WOULDN'T EVER BLAME THEM FOR ANYTHING, RIGHT? THIS STATE OUGHT TO KNOW BETTER THAN MOST HOW POLITICIANS CAN CHASE BUSINESS OUT, OR KEEP THEM FROM COMING.

BUT I ALSO KNOW THAT WHILE WE SHOULD GET SOME OF THE BLAME AND SOME OF THE CREDIT, IT CERTAINLY IS NOT GOVERNMENT ALONE THAT MAKES OR BREAKS A COMMUNITY.

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES ARE THOSE WHERE GOVERNMENT, EDUCATION, AND BUSINESS WORK WELL TOGETHER. I HAVE ADDED A FOURTH: THE MEDIA.

WHO YOU SEE UP HERE TODAY REPRESENT THOSE SECTORS. GREGG GOTHREAU, ROB GUIDRY, AND DON BRIGGS REPRESENT THE PRIVATE SECTOR THAT IS SO IMPORTANT TO DRIVING OUR ECONOMY AND KEEPING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE HOME.

BUT, I CANNOT IMAGINE WHERE OUR BUSINESS COMMUNITY WOULD BE TODAY IF NOT FOR EDUCATION. DR. T-JOE, DR. HARDER, DR. COOPER, AND FATHER ARCENEUX. UNIVERSITY, COMMUNITY/TECHNICAL COLLEGE, PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS. THANK YOU ALL FOR HELPING KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING!

I USUALLY INVITE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE LPUA TO HELP REPRESENT GOVERNMENT. DON BERTRAND IS SERVING AS LPUA CHAIR THIS YEAR.

BRANDON SHELVIN WAS SUPPOSED TO BE UP HERE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL, BUT HIS CAR BROKE DOWN AND WAS TRYING TO FIND SOMEONE TO LEND HIM A CAR.

I OFFERED HIM MINE, BUT HE SAID NO THANKS, NOTHING LESS THAN A MERCEDES.

SO, KEVIN NAQUIN IS HERE AS VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL.

AND OF COURSE CHERRY (AND OTHERS) HELP REPRESENT THE MEDIA. IF THE MEDIA ARE NOT ON BOARD, ACCURATELY REPORTING WHAT WE DO, PULLING US IN THE SAME DIRECTION, IT BECOMES ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BECOME A GREAT COMMUNITY.

AS THEY SAY, "IF YOU'RE NOT PART OF THE SOLUTION, YOU'RE PART OF THE PROBLEM."

FINANCES

I WANT TO TAKE A BRIEF MOMENT TO LET YOU KNOW WHERE WE ARE FINANCIALLY. ONE YEAR AGO, IN MY STATE OF THE PARISH MESSAGE AND IN FACT, IN MY FORMAL BUDGET MESSAGE TO THE COUNCIL I WROTE THE FOLLOWING:

"THERE HAS BEEN A HISTORY IN THIS GOVERNMENT OF DIPPING INTO OUR RESERVES TO BALANCE THE BUDGET FOR AN 'EASY FIX,' WHEN IT HAS MADE SENSE TO DO SO. THE LAST TWO YEARS, WE HAVE DONE SO OUT OF NECESSITY BUT IT CANNOT CONTINUE."

WELL, AS I STAND HERE TODAY, I AM PROUD TO TELL YOU IT HAS NOT CONTINUED.

THE COUNCIL SUPPORTED MY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CURRENT AND PRIOR YEAR BUDGETS AND WE MADE SOME HARD BUT NECESSARY DECISIONS TO PROTECT OUR SAVINGS ACCOUNT AND STRENGTHEN OUR FINANCIAL POSITION.

WE HAVE NOT GIVEN PAY RAISES TO HARD-WORKING PUBLIC EMPLOYEES IN 2 YEARS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF THIS GOVERNMENT.

WE IMPLEMENTED A HIRING-FREEZE OVER 2 BUDGET YEARS. IN THE CURRENT BUDGET, WE ELIMINATED 78 VACANT POSITIONS INSTEAD OF FILLING THEM. WE HAVE IMPACTED PUBLIC SERVICE.

IT TAKES LONGER FOR OUR PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT TO RESPOND AND TO CUT GRASS AND PATCH POTHOLES. OUR POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENT RESOURCES ARE PUSHED TO THEIR VERY LIMITS.

BUT JUST THIS MORNING WE HAVE HEARD FROM OUR AUDITOR, THAT THOSE TOUGH DECISIONS HAVE PAID OFF. EVEN HE WAS SURPRISED TO SEE THAT WE HAVE STOPPED THE

USE OF FUND BALANCE IN SUCH SHORT ORDER AND WE HAVE STRENGTHENED OUR OPERATING BUDGET BY ELIMINATING THE USE OF FUND BALANCE.

FURTHER PROOF THAT LCG DOES NOT HAVE A SPENDING PROBLEM

I AM NOT GOING TO BORE YOU WITH DETAILS THAT YOU WILL FORGET OR PUT YOU TO SLEEP. WHAT I WILL AGAIN TRY TO EXPLAIN IS THE QUESTION THAT SOME STILL ASK ABOUT WHY WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH MONEY EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE MORE PEOPLE.

I SUSPECT THAT MOST OF YOU ALREADY UNDERSTAND IT, BECAUSE YOU WORK IN BUSINESS, AND BUSINESSES RAISES PRICES AND RATES DESPITE HAVING MORE PEOPLE LIVING HERE.

SADLY, THERE ARE SOME THAT STILL LIKE JUST SPOUTING RHETORIC, BECAUSE IT SOUNDS GOOD OR GETS HEADLINES, BUT LETS CHANGE THE CONVERSATION TO INTELLIGENT, CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSION. TO SAY LOCAL GOVERNMENT HAS A SPENDING PROBLEM LIKE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS RIDICULOUS AND HOLLOW.

ADMITTEDLY, IT SOUNDS GOOD AND REQUIRES NO THINKING AT ALL. LET'S EXAMINE THIS THOUGH.

TAKE A LOOK AT THIS SLIDE. INTERESTING...IF YOU WILL ALL COME RIGHT UP TO THE SCREEN, YOU WILL SEE... COURTHOUSE AND JAIL: ANYONE THINK WE SPEND TOO MUCH ON OUR COURTHOUSE? HEALTH UNIT: ANYONE THINK THIS UNNECESSARY, OR THAT WE HAVE A SPENDING PROBLEM? WHAT ABOUT LIBRARIES? AIRPORT? DRAINAGE? TOO MUCH SPENDING ON DRAINAGE? ROADS?

OF COURSE THE ANSWER IS ABSOLUTELY NOT! AND, THE REASON WE ARE NOT SPENDING TOO MUCH IS BECAUSE YOU/WE VOTED FOR THAT MONEY TO GO THERE.

YOU CAN GO DOWN THE LINE. WE VOTED ON EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THESE MILLAGES, SO IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY WE ARE SPENDING TOO MUCH, AFTER ALL, OUR JOB IS TO SPEND OUR TAXES WHERE YOU SAY YOU WANT TAXES SPENT. ANYONE NOT AGREE WITH THAT PRINCIPLE?

I WILL SAY THIS AGAIN. ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS THAT YOU/WE VOTE ON ALL OF OUR TAXES. THE TAXES WE HAVE IN PLACE NOW, YOU ASKED FOR! WE CANNOT SEND OUR TAXES ANYWHERE TO TRY AND SAVE THE WORLD, AND 100% OF YOUR MONEY GOES TO MAKING LAFAYETTE A BETTER PLACE. AND, YES, THAT INCLUDES TIFS, YOU GET TO VOTE WITH YOUR STEERING WHEEL.

UNLIKE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, WE DO NOT FORCE YOU TO PAY A TAX YOU DON'T WANT TO PAY. AND, FOR THOSE WHO ARE THINKING YOU DIDN'T VOTE FOR THESE TAXES, "WE THE PEOPLE," IS SINGULAR.

YOUR OPINION MATTERS, BUT IT DOESN'T NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF THE MAJORITY.

SALES TAXES

FOR EVERY DOLLAR IN SALES TAXES WE COLLECT, 65 PENNIES MUST GO TO CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, THAT IS ROADS AND DRAINAGE, BRICKS AND MORTAR. WE CANNOT USE IT IN THE GENERAL FUND FOR OPERATIONS...WE VOTED AND TOLD GOVERNMENT THAT MANY YEARS AGO. DID YOU KNOW THAT IT USED TO BE 85%?

IF WE HAD STAYED AT 85%, WE WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BOND HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF INFRASTRUCTURE OVER THE YEARS. THAT CHANGE OR REDEDICATION OF THOSE PERCENTAGES WAS DONE TO GIVE PAY RAISES, MOSTLY TO FIRE AND POLICE.

I'M NOT SAYING IT WAS THE WRONG THING TO DO, OBVIOUSLY, SINCE THE PEOPLE VOTED TO DO SO.

WHAT I AM TRYING TO ILLUSTRATE IS THAT WHEN YOU TAKE FROM PETER TO TAKE CARE OF PAUL, THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES.

WHEN WE SAY "NO" TO ONE THING, WE ARE SAYING, "YES" TO SOMETHING ELSE. IN THIS CASE, SAYING "NO" TO A NEW TAX FOR FIRE AND POLICE, WAS SAYING "YES" TO BUILDING LESS INFRASTRUCTURE. OUR TRAFFIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES TODAY, ARE A DIRECT RESULT OF THAT QUESTION AND THAT ANSWER, SEVERAL YEARS AGO.

WE AS A COMMUNITY SAID "YES" TO LESS INFRASTRUCTURE, BECAUSE THE ELECTED OFFICIALS BACK THEN HEARD YOU WOULD SAY "NO" TO A NEW TAX FOR FIRE AND POLICE.

PLEASE DON'T BLAME TODAY'S POLITICIANS FOR THE DECISION WE ALL MADE TOGETHER SEVERAL YEARS AGO...WE ARE GETTING WHAT WE PAY FOR.

IMAGINE MY DELIGHT WHEN I REALIZED OUR TRAFFIC ISSUES WERE YOUR FAULT, NOT MINE! SO, I INTEND TO START CALLING EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU AT 10:00 AT NIGHT...JUST KIDDING. BUT, I KNOW YOU UNDERSTAND. THE RULES CHANGED AND WE MUST ABIDE BY THOSE RULES, THEREFORE THE RESULTS ALSO CHANGED.

TWO EXAMPLES OF THE MANY I COULD GIVE ABOUT OUR FINANCIAL ISSUES WE DEAL WITH: WHEN I CAME INTO OFFICE, THE CITY WAS SENDING 9 PENNIES FOR EVERY DOLLAR IN PAYROLL FOR FIRE AND POLICE TO THE STATE RETIREMENT SYSTEM.

TODAY, IT IS MORE THAN 30 CENTS! NOT OUR CHOICE, NOT OUR DOING, BUT OUR REALITY.

STARTING THIS PAST JANUARY 1ST, WE CAN NO LONGER EUTHANIZE ANIMALS USING CARBON MONOXIDE GAS. STATE LAW MANDATES US TO PUT ALL ANIMALS DOWN BY INJECTION, WITH SOME CASES REQUIRING ANESTHESIA FIRST BY A VETERINARIAN. THE STATE SENT US NO MONEY FOR THIS MORE EXPENSIVE PROCEDURE, BUT WE HAVE TO FOLLOW THE LAW. AND, JUST A LITTLE MORE MONEY IS TAKEN FROM OUR BUDGET.

PUTTING ANIMALS DOWN MORE HUMANELY IS OF COURSE, NOT A BAD THING, BUT THIS INCREASED COST IS A REALITY WE MUST DEAL WITH.

IN NEITHER OF THOSE TWO CASES DID WE ASK YOU TO INCREASE REVENUES, WE SIMPLY TOOK FROM PETER TO TAKE CARE OF PAUL. AND, THE CONSEQUENCES CONTINUE.

I HAVE BEGGED THE MEDIA TO DO A SERIES ON WHY OUR FINANCES ARE WHERE THEY ARE TODAY, SO WE CAN ALL DEVELOP A BETTER UNDERSTANDING TOGETHER, THEREBY WORKING TOGETHER TO CONTINUE THE MOMENTUM LAFAYETTE IS BUILDING. I AM STILL HOPING, I'M STILL BEGGING.

WHEN YOU HEAR POLITICIANS SAY SOMEONE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND SOMETHING, THEY ARE USUALLY CORRECT. YOU SEE, TO HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO FIRST HAVE A CLUE, AND I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT MOST EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM HAS NO CLUE ABOUT THE REALITIES OF OUR FINANCES, OUR REVENUES OR OUR SPENDING, ANYMORE THAN I DID, 9 YEARS AGO.

IT IS NOT A KNOCK ON ANYONE; IT IS JUST A REALITY OF THE COMPLEXITY OF GOVERNMENT, COUPLED WITH OUR OWN BUSY LIVES.

BUT, WE DESPERATELY NEED HELP WITH THIS, BOTH FROM THE PEOPLE THAT CARE ABOUT LAFAYETTE AND FROM THE MEDIA IF WE ARE GOING TO CHANGE THIS CONVERSTAION.

THAT IS WHY I HAVE SAID I'D LIKE TO PUT TOGETHER A "BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE," (YES I KNOW IT IS AN OVER-USED TERM, BUT IT GIVES YOU THE PICTURE) TO TAKE A COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT OUR COMMUNITY'S NEEDS, PARTICULARLY THIS GOVERNMENT.

THEN SHOW US THE PRIORITIES, AND FINALLY WAYS TO FUND THOSE PRIORITIES. WE MAY HAVE MILLAGES THAT NEED TO BE ADJUSTED, IN SOME CASES UP, MAYBE EVEN DOWN IN A CASE OR TWO.

WE CANNOT CONTINUE TO IGNORE THE CHANGING RESPONSIBILITIES OF THINGS LIKE ANIMAL CONTROL, ESPECIALLY IN A CITY THAT PRIDES ITSELF IN BEING A LEADER.

WE COULD LOOK AT THE POSSIBILITIES OF DOING A PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY MILLAGE THAT TAKES CARE OF MOSQUITO CONTROL, THE HEALTH UNIT, AND ANIMAL CONTROL.

MAYBE COMBINING ALL THREE WOULD REQUIRE NO ACTUAL INCREASE IN TAXES, JUST A MORE EFFICIENT USE OF WHAT YOU HAVE ALREADY VOTED ON.

I WANT PEOPLE WHO ARE FANS AND SKEPTICS ALIKE. I AM CALLING ON INTELLIGENT, DELIBERATE PEOPLE WHO ARE OPEN-MINDED AND SOLUTION-ORIENTED.

WE DON'T NEED ANYONE WHO HAS ALREADY GOT IT ALL FIGURED OUT, BUT ARE ACTUALLY CLUELESS.

MOSTLY WHAT I DO NOT WANT FOR THIS BLUE RIBBON PANEL ARE PEOPLE WHO WOULD NEVER ALLOW FACTS TO GET IN THE WAY OF THEIR OPINIONS.

WE WANT PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR FUTURE IN LAFAYETTE.

THIS IS A MAJOR STEP IN A NEW INITIATIVE FOR OUR COMMUNITY I CALL: MOMENTUM LAFAYETTE

IT STARTS WITH CHANGING THE CONVERSATION; IT STARTS WITH YOU.

WE ARE GOING TO HAVE A GOVERNMENT AND WE ARE GOING TO HAVE POLITICIANS, AND WE WOULD ALL BE BETTER SERVED BY WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS REAL SOLUTIONS;

THAT'S HOW WE WILL BUILD UPON OUR MOMENTUM.

IT STARTS WITH THE MEDIA MAKING THE DECISION TO PARTICIPATE AND PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE.

WE DESPERATELY NEED ALL THE MEDIA TO DO RESPONSIBLE, ACCURATE REPORTING. I HAVE SEEN MISTAKES AND MIS-INFORMATION, THAT SET US BACK A YEAR, A MOMENTUM STOPPER.

I HAVE COMMITTED 9 YEARS OF MAKING MYSELF AVAILABLE AT ALL HOURS TO TRY AND COMMUNICATE THE FACTS. MY STAFF IS ALSO AVAILABLE, AND I BELIEVE EVERYONE KNOWS IT, SO PLEASE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF US.

I WANT TO TOUCH BRIEFLY ON SOMETHING MOST STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND, THE ALLOCATION PROCESS OF HOW "PARISH" GOVERNMENT REIMBURSES "CITY" GOVERNMENT. ONCE AGAIN, THE TWO GOVERNMENTS WERE NEVER CONSOLIDATED.

THE EFFICIENCIES ARE EASY TO IDENTIFY IN MANY CASES: THERE IS ONLY ONE PERSON IN MY POSITION, WITH ONE STAFF FOR THIS POSITION.

SAME IS TRUE OF POSITIONS LIKE CAO, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES, PARKS AND RECREATION, ETC. MANY ARE EASY TO ALLOCATE, OR SO I THOUGHT.

LET'S START WITH MY POSITION. I AM ELECTED PARISH-WIDE AS BOTH THE MAYOR OF LAFAYETTE AND THE PARISH PRESIDENT. IT WOULD STAND TO REASON THAT THE EXPENSES OF MY OFFICE WOULD BE ALLOCATED BASED ON POPULATION, KIND OF A ONE MAN, ONE VOTE APPROACH.

WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT THE PARISH WAS ONLY PAYING ABOUT 18% OF THE EXPENSES OF MY OFFICE, I WAS STUNNED. THE MORE I LOOKED, THE WORSE IT GOT.

ALLOCATIONS FOR PUBLIC WORKS TURNED OUT TO BE IN THE 30% RANGE, YET 60% OF THEIR EFFORT WAS OUTSIDE THE CITY! OBVIOUSLY, I WAS OUTRAGED BY THIS DISCOVERY.

I DID SOME MORE DIGGING AND WITH THE HELP OF OUR CFO, LORRIE TOUPS FOUND AN EVEN MORE ALARMING DISCOVERY: THE ALLOCATION FROM THE PARISH WHEN CONSOLIDATION TOOK PLACE WAS BASED ON POPULATION NUMBERS, BUT ABOUT FIVE YEARS INTO CONSOLIDATION IT WAS CHANGED IN A WAY THAT IS CLEAR THAT SOMEONE WAS RAIDING THE CITY'S COOKIE JAR.

IN TALKING TO FORMER COUNCILMEN, THEY HAD NO IDEA, SO THIS WAS DONE QUIETLY IN A WAY THAT NO ONE NOTICED. NOT THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, NOT MANY OF THE ELECTED OFFICIALS, NOT THE MEDIA, NO ONE!

IF WE ARE GOING TO EVER SUPPORT A CITY-ONLY TAX, I BELIEVE WE HAVE TO DO SO WITH THE CONFIDENCE THAT CITY TAXES ARE STAYING WHERE THEY LEGALLY BELONG AND

TODAY, I CANNOT STAND UP HERE TODAY, AND TELL YOU THAT WITH ANY CONFIDENCE WHATSOEVER.

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

WE CAN WORK INTERNALLY TO FIND THE BASIC SOLUTIONS, I THINK, I HOPE. IT WILL REQUIRE MORE "DIRECT PAYMENT" FOR SERVICES, AS OPPOSED TO AN "ALLOCATION" OF MONEY.

WE WILL HAVE TO ASSIGN SPECIFIC CREWS TO WORK OUTSIDE THE CITY, BASED ON A BUDGET THAT IS DERIVED FROM SEEING WHAT IS 'LEFT OVER' IN PARISH FUNDS AFTER THE ALLOCATIONS THAT ARE OBVIOUS AND IN WHICH WE HAVE NO CHOICE, ARE DONE.

WE MUST PUT MONEY IN THE RESERVE ACCOUNT, THEN DO THE WORK WITH THE MONEY WE HAVE. THAT'S IT, I SEE NO OTHER WAY.

EXPECT TO SEE LONGER GRASS AND LESS DRAINAGE WORK IN UNINCORPORATED LAFAYETTE, CONSEQUENCES.

I HAVE THREE GOALS THAT I THINK FUNDAMENTAL TO MAKING IT BETTER FOR FUTURE MAYORS AND CITY/PARISH PRESIDENTS, SO BETTER FOR THE PEOPLE. FIXING CONSOLIDATION, ADOPTING AN ANNEXATION MAP FOR THE PARISH, AND IMPROVING THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF BROUSSARD.

SOLVING THESE ISSUES WILL HELP THOSE FUTURE LEADERS TO WORK MORE CLOSELY TOGETHER TO KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING.
CONSOLIDATION (GOAL #1)

I CANNOT IMAGINE ANYONE IN LAFAYETTE THINKING THAT BEING "KINDA SORTA" CONSOLIDATED, THE WAY WE ARE NOW, IS PROPER OR WORKING RIGHT FOR ALL INVOLVED. IT HAS TO BE FIXED BEFORE THE DAMAGE BECOMES TOO EXTENSIVE TO REPAIR.

THE LAST CHOICE WE WERE GIVEN WAS TO KEEP WHAT WE HAVE OR "DE-CONSOLIDATE." WE HEARD PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER SAY THAT LAFAYETTE CITY NEEDED TO HAVE ITS AUTONOMY JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER CITY IN AMERICA TODAY.

EVEN WHEN THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CAME OUT IN OPPOSITION TO DE-CONSOLIDATION, IT CITED THE NEED TO PROTECT THE SELF DETERMINATION OF THE CITY BY PREVENTING NON-CITIZENS OF THE CITY FROM VOTING ON ISSUES EXCLUSIVE TO THE CITY.

A CHAMBER TASK FORCE HAS BEEN STUDYING DEFICIENCIES AND FASHIONING POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS.

I AM TOLD THAT THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE CHAMBER'S PUBLIC POLICY DIVISION FOR CONSIDERATION AND ANY RECOMMENDATION(S) WILL BE CONSIDERED BY THE FULL BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I SAID THAT THE BEST FIX, SHORT OF DE-CONSOLIDATING, WAS TO HAVE FIVE CITY COUNCILMEN VOTED ON FROM WITHIN THE CITY WHO WOULD SERVE WITH

FOUR COUNCILMEN ELECTED FROM OUTSIDE THE CITY LIMITS OF LAFAYETTE. THE 5 WOULD SERVE AS THE CITY COUNCIL AND THE NINE AS THE PARISH COUNCIL.

I WAS TOLD THE NUMBERS WOULD NOT WORK, AND WAS TOLD THIS SEVERAL TIMES, SO, SINCE I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND ALL OF THE WORKINGS IN ELECTION LAW, I TOOK IT AS FACTUAL.

THEN ONE-DAY CHARTER COMMISSION MEMBER GREG MANUEL BROUGHT MIKE HEFNER, WHO IS A DEMOGRAPHER, INTO MY OFFICE.

IT TURNS OUT THAT THE NUMBERS DID WORK AND WE COULD HAVE HAD THAT AS AN OPTION FOR THE PEOPLE TO VOTE ON. HOWEVER, THE CHARTER COMMISSION DID NOT CHOOSE TO DO SO AT THE TIME, AND SOME OF THEM REGRET IT TODAY.

REMEMBER, THE CITY GOVERNMENT IS STILL A SEPARATE ENTITY FROM PARISH GOVERNMENT. NONE OF THE SMALL MUNICIPALITIES PARTICIPATE IN CONSOLIDATION, THEY PARTICIPATE IN PARISH GOVERNMENT ONLY, JUST AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE, AND NOTHING HAS CHANGED FOR THEM. ANY CHANGES TO OUR CHARTER WILL STILL HAVE NO AFFECT ON THOSE TOWNS.

WE HAVE THREE CHOICES THAT I SEE:

1) KEEP WHAT WE HAVE AND START LOSING THE MOMENTUM, BECAUSE IT IS AN INEVITABLE DISASTER.

2) COMPLETELY UNDO WHAT WE HAVE, OR

3) GO WITH A PLAN THAT WOULD GET US CLOSER TO THE "AMERICAN" FORM OF GOVERNMENT THAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE, ONE THAT IS FAIR TO THE TAXPAYERS OF THE CITY AND OF THE ENTIRE PARISH, AND ONE THAT TAKES A BALANCED APPROACH TO GOVERNING, WHEREBY PEOPLE ARE PROPERLY REPRESENTED, WITH POLITICIANS ELECTED BASED ON WHERE THEY PAY TAXES.

AND, AS A LAST RESORT, I AM WORKING WITH OUR LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION ON OTHER SOLUTIONS IN THE EVENT WE DO NOT FIX CONSOLIDATION.

ANNEXATION (GOAL #2)

WITHIN A COUPLE OF WEEKS OF MY TAKING OFFICE IN 2004, I INVITED ALL OF THE MAYORS TO MY OFFICE TO VISIT. BY THE END OF THAT FIRST HOUR-LONG MEETING, I SAW AN 800 POUND GORILLA IN THE ROOM: IT WAS ANNEXATION. IT HAS BEEN THE SINGLE ISSUE THAT, IN MY OPINION, CAUSES THE MOST TENSION AND MISTRUST, THEREFORE LESS OPPORTUNITY FOR COOPERATION, THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

I BELIEVE IF WE ARE GOING TO BUILD ON OUR MOMENTUM, WE HAVE TO HAVE MAYORS WORKING TOGETHER, WITHOUT THIS BURDEN OVERRIDING EVERY ISSUE.

AS WE ALL HAVE LEARNED, "PARISH" GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO BE FORCED TO REDUCE SERVICES TO THE UNINCORPORATED AREA OF OUR PARISH, AND ACTUALLY THAT HAS BEGUN.

ONE SOLUTION IS FOR ALL OF THE MUNICIPALITIES IN THE PARISH TO STEP UP TO THE PLATE AND RELIEVE PARISH GOVERNMENT OF SOME OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY.

I HAVE BEGUN TALKING TO SOME OF THE MAYORS ABOUT POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

ONE THOUGHT IS TO "FORCE" ANNEXATION, INTO ALL 6 TOWNS, LEGISLATIVELY. THIS WOULD REDUCE THE NEED FOR MORE TAXES.

LET ME EXPLAIN.

I WENT TO MAYOR WILSON VIATOR OF YOUNGSVILLE AND ASKED HIM TO SHOW ME ON A MAP OF THE AREA, WHAT HE SAW AS "FUTURE YOUNGSVILLE." WHAT HIS ULTIMATE DREAM WAS, BUT KEEPING IN MIND THAT LAFAYETTE HAD NOWHERE TO GROW BUT TOWARDS ALL OF THE TOWNS, WHILE THEY COULD GROW MORE OUT INTO THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF THE PARISH.

AFTER HE SHOWED WHAT HE ENVISIONED, I ASKED HIM TO SHOW WHAT HE FELT YOUNGSVILLE COULD DEAL WITH IF ANNEXATION WAS FORCED IMMEDIATELY.

NATURALLY, THOSE FUTURE BORDERS WERE REDUCED SIGNIFICANTLY.

IF EVERY TOWN, INCLUDING LAFAYETTE, WAS FORCED TO ANNEX AN AREA AROUND THEM, IT WOULD REDUCE THE DEMAND ON PARISH GOVERNMENT, BUT WOULD NOT REDUCE, SIGNIFICANTLY, THE REVENUES. DON'T FORGRT, WE ALL PAY PARISH TAXES.

IF EACH TOWN HAD ITS FUTURE ANNEXATION FIXED LEGISLATIVELY, IT WOULD ACCOMPLISH A COUPLE OF THINGS. FIRST, WE COULD ELIMINATE THAT 800 POUND GORILLA, BECAUSE EVERYONE WOULD KNOW WHO WOULD GET WHAT IN THE FUTURE.

WE ALSO KNOW THAT IT IS MOSTLY ILLEGAL TO SPEND CITY DOLLARS OUTSIDE OF A CITY. BUT, IF LEGISLATION WAS PUT IN PLACE TO ALLOW FOR CITIES TO SPEND MONEY IN THEIR NEW "AREA OF INFLUENCE," THEY MIGHT DO SO WHEN IT MADE SENSE FOR THEIR CITY, KNOWING IT WOULD EVENTUALLY BE IN THEIR TOWN, AND NOT IN SOME OTHER. AN INVESTMENT IN THEIR FUTURE.

WE COULD ALSO ALLOW EACH TOWN TO GET SOME OF THE "PARISH" TAXES FROM THAT AREA TO HELP WITH THE NEW FOUND RESPONSIBILITY. MAYBE.

IT IS FAR FROM THE SILVER BULLET OR THE ONLY SOLUTION, BUT IT COULD BE A MAJOR PART OF A SOLUTION. AN ALTERNATIVE IS EASY...HIGHER TAXES!

I WANT TO THANK MAYORS VIATOR, MORRISON AND BRASSEAU FOR CARING ENOUGH TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITIES.

TO MAYOR THIBODEAUX, I KNOW YOU WOULD BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO DISCUSS DUSON COOPERATING, BUT THERE ARE JUST NO BORDER ISSUES WITH DUSON. WE WILL CONTINUE TALKING; WE WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD ON OUR COLLECTIVE MOMENTUM.

BROUSSARD #3

WE HAVE A GREAT WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL OF THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS IN LAFAYETTE PARISH. I WOULD LOVE TO SEE THAT SAME RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF BROUSSARD, THE PEOPLE DESERVE IT. I AM BEGGING FOR THE LEADERSHIP OF BROUSSARD TO DROP THEIR ANNEXATION LAWSUIT AGAINST THE CITY OF LAFAYETTE. IF THEY DO, ALL SERVICES WILL BE RESTORED INSTANTLY. IT'S HOW A COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP SHOULD WORK.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

OUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IS REALLY THE FIRST PIECE OF MOMENTUM LAFAYETTE. IT WILL LAY OUT A PLAN, AND MAP OUT THE ROUTE TO CONTINUE THE MOMENTUM.

WE HAVE MANY ISSUES TO DEAL WITH, AND WE HAVE ABUNDANT OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD. AS THE DISCUSSION CONTINUES ABOUT HOW TO PAY FOR THE GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE YOU DEMAND, WE HAVE GOT TO CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR EFFICIENCIES AND DECIDE ON PRIORITIES.

I CAN THINK OF NO BETTER VEHICLE TO SPEND OUR DOLLARS WISELY, THAN BY PLANNING. THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN HAS FORCED US TO TAKE A COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT OURSELVES; OUR PRIORITIES AND OUR FUNDING. THAT RESEARCH WILL BE VERY HELPFUL TO OUR BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE.

THERE ARE THOSE THAT QUESTION THE MONEY SPENT ON A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN. I APPRECIATE THE QUESTION, BUT QUESTION THE QUESTION. WHO DOESN'T PLAN AHEAD FOR ANYTHING OF VALUE, FROM A VACATION TO BUILDING A HOME OR STARTING A BUSINESS?

BUT, YOU HAVE GOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EXERCISE. MOST OF YOU HAVE NOT. IT IS THE EASIEST, CHEAPEST THING A COMMUNITY COULD EVER ASK YOU TO DO, JUST SHOW UP.

THE FORUMS ARE USUALLY NOT MORE THAN AN HOUR AND A HALF, MAYBE TWO. TAKE A LOOK AT WHO MATTERS TO YOU THE MOST, THEN SAY YOU DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THEIR FUTURE.

PLEASE HELP US STEER THE MOMENTUM IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, WE NEED YOU.

RE-ORG FOR PLANNING DEPT.

SPEAKING OF EFFICIENCIES, I AM GOING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AN OPPORTUNITY.

THIS PAST YEAR SAW THE RETIREMENT OF GAIL SMITH AS DIRECTOR OF OUR DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES. WE MISS YOU GAIL AND OUR OPPORTUNITIES TO VISIT, WE HOPE YOU ARE DOING WELL!

GAIL'S POSITION WAS NOT FILLED. INSTEAD, I ELIMINATED THAT DEPARTMENT, AND SPREAD ITS FUNCTIONS AMONG OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND CAO, DEE STANLEY.

(NOW, PLEASE DON'T OVER REACT WITH LOUD THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE)

SOMETIME IN THE NEXT 45 DAYS OR SO, TONY TRAMEL WILL RETIRE. I WILL NOT REPLACE HIM...WHO COULD? THANK YOU TONY, YOU HAVE TAKEN A LOT OF HEAT OVER THE YEARS FOR SOMETHING THAT TURNS OUT TO BE "THEIR" FAULT. YOU NEVER TOOK YOUR EYE OFF OF REALITY, DESPITE ALL OF OUR PERCEPTIONS AND ALL OF OUR ADVICE.

WITH COUNCIL APPROVAL, TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION WILL AGAIN BECOME A DIVISION OF PUBLIC WORKS, WHERE IT WAS PRE-CONSOLIDATION. THAT ELIMINATES TWO DIRECTORS.

TO TOM CARROLL, THANK YOU FOR HELPING US BUILD ON OUR MOMENTUM BY TAKING ON ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

I BELIEVE THAT IF WE ARE GOING TO BE SERIOUS ABOUT PLANNING, WE SHOULD HAVE A TRUE, STAND-ALONE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.

WE CURRENTLY HAVE PLANNERS IN TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION AND WE HAVE PLANNERS IN PLANNING, ZONING AND CODES.

WE CAN BUILD MOMENTUM BY PUTTING THESE FOLKS IN THE SAME DEPARTMENT. SO, I WILL GO TO THE COUNCIL TO REQUEST THE CREATION OF A PLANNING DEPARTMENT THAT WILL NOT COST US MORE MONEY, BUT WILL, IN FACT ULTIMATELY PLAY A ROLE IN SAVING US MONEY.

WE ALREADY WORK WITH UL AND THE SCHOOL SYSTEM, AND I WILL OFFER THEM SPACE SO THAT ALL OF OUR PLANNERS ARE WORKING TOGETHER SIDE-BY-SIDE EVERYDAY, ATTEMPTING TO REALIZE ALL OF THE EFFICIENCIES AND TAKING ADVANTAGES OF THE ECONOMIES OF SCALE THAT CAN BE ACHIEVED WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER.

OUR CURRENT PZC DEPT. WOULD BECOME SOMETHING LIKE THE DEPARTMENT OF ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW.

IT WILL BE A NAME THAT CONNOTES SOMETHING POSITIVE, RATHER THAN SOMETHING NEGATIVE, LIKE CODES, PERMITS AND REGULATIONS.

SOMETHING THAT SAYS LAFAYETTE WANTS TO FIND A WAY TO HELP YOU DEVELOP, NOT DISCOURAGE YOU!

THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE WILL LOWER STANDARDS, BECAUSE THAT WOULD LOWER PROPERTY VALUES. ELEANOR BOUY, AS ALWAYS, THANK YOU FOR BEING A TEAM PLAYER.

HORSE FARM

AS YOU KNOW WE HAVE SPENT A FEW YEARS IN GETTING THE HORSE FARM TO ANOTHER LEVEL. WE HAVE GONE THROUGH STAGES THAT WERE VERY IMPORTANT TO ITS EVOLUTION.

THE PROPERTY WAS INITIALLY "SAVED" BY THE SAVE THE HORSE FARM GROUP, MADE UP OF CITIZENS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE. THEY HELPED PREVENT IT FROM BECOMING A SHOPPING CENTER.

THEN, WE TOOK IT FROM THERE AND THE CITY PURCHASED IT, PRESERVING IT FOREVER, AS PUBLIC GREEN SPACE.

I APPROACHED THE CFA SEVERAL YEARS AGO ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF TURNING THE PARK OVER TO THEM, TAKING IT OUT FROM THE RESTRICTIONS OF GOVERNMENT.

THIS MAY BE THE BEST PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE HISTORY OF LAFAYETTE!

OVER THE YEARS, THAT IDEA HAS EVOLVED, DUE IN LARGE PART TO THE AMAZING AMOUNT OF RESEARCH EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE CFA.

TODAY, I HAVE BEEN GIVEN PERMISSION TO ANNOUNCE THAT A NEW NON-PROFIT HAS BEEN FORMED TO BRING OUR PARK TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL.

THE NAME IS APPROPRIATELY, "LAFAYETTE CENTRAL PARK, INC."

THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THIS WILL BE THE NAME OF THE PARK.

THEY TELL ME THERE IS A MASTER GARDENER ON THE BOARD, A PREVIOUS EQUESTRIAN THAT ACTUALLY RODE AT THE HORSE FARM. THERE ARE LIFE-LONG RESIDENTS OF LAFAYETTE AND COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPISTS ON THIS NEW BOARD. THEY ALSO ASSURE ME THAT THE BOARD WILL HAVE A WIDE, DIVERSE VARIETY OF EXPERTISE, INTEGRITY, AND WILL BRING A VARIETY OF PERSPECTIVES, OPINIONS AND EXPERIENCES TO THE BOARD, INSURING THAT WE GET A PRODUCT WE WILL ALL BE PROUD OF.

VERY IMPORTANT TO THE PROCESS, THEY ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO A LOT OF COMMUNITY INPUT, AND VOLUNTEERS TO SERVE ON VARIOUS COMMITTEES.

I CANNOT SAY ENOUGH ABOUT HOW LUCKY LAFAYETTE IS TO HAVE AN ORGANIZATION LIKE THE CFA THAT HAS SERVED AS THE KIND OF HONEST BROKER WE NEEDED FOR PUTTING THIS TYPE OF COMPLEX DEAL TOGETHER.

(BTW I WANT TO THANK MIKE HEBERT AND TAMMY PARKER PRATT FOR YOUR PATIENCE AND HELP IN GETTING THIS DONE AS WELL AS CHARLES LANDRY, HANK PERRET, LENNY LEMOINE AND OF COURSE, RAYMOND HEBERT)

I NOW HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE THAN EVER THAT THIS WILL TRULY BE A WORLD-CLASS PARK FOR OUR COMMUNITY.

I LOOK FORWARD TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEW BOARD MEMBERS, SO I CAN THANK THEM FOR THEIR INTEREST IN RAISING THE BAR FOR LAFAYETTE.

I ALSO WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE ANOTHER GREAT COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION, THE LPTFA. THEY HAVE BEEN ASKED TO FRONT THE ROUGHLY \$2.5M FOR THE INITIAL "SOFT COSTS." THIS GROUP OF PEOPLE SERVES FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN TO HELP BUILD UP LAFAYETTE. TO JOHN ARECENEUX AND YOUR BOARD, THANK YOU!

TO BOTH OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS, THE PEOPLE OF LAFAYETTE OWE YOU A DEBT OF GRATITUDE. FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART, THANK YOU ALL FOR KEEPING THE MOMENTUM GOING!

ENDING

WE HAVE SO VERY MUCH GOING FOR US. THE CHAMBER IS BRINGING IN THE MAYOR OF OKLAHOMA CITY WHERE THEY HAVE A BUSINESS COMMUNITY THAT IS STRONGLY SUPPORTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY'S EFFORTS.

OKLAHOMA CITY HAD TO PULL ITSELF UP AFTER THE OIL BUST SEVERAL YEARS AGO.

WE HAD A GROUP OF INTERESTED CITIZENS VISIT PITTSBURGH, A CITY THAT HIT ROCK BOTTOM MANY YEARS AGO.

THESE CITIES HAD A COUPLE OF THINGS IN COMMON: BOTH HAD TO 'REVITALIZE' BECAUSE OF A BAD ECONOMY, AND BOTH HAD STRONG LEADERSHIP FROM THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

WHAT IF THEY HAD GALVANIZED BEFORE HITTING THEIR RESPECTIVE LOW POINTS? WHAT IF THEY HAD TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THEIR MOMENTUM WHEN THINGS WERE GOING WELL? MIGHT THEY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO AVOID THE LOWS?

WE ARE RIDING THE WAVE OF A GOOD ECONOMY AND POSITIVE ENERGY, ARE WE GOING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT OR SQUANDER IT? ARE WE GOING TO EMBRACE OUR MOMENTUM? THE FUTURE WILL FIND OUT.

I AM MORE OPTIMISTIC THAN EVER THAT THE CHAMBER IS GOING TO TRULY GET BEHIND THE MOMENTUM WE HAVE GOING FOR US. IF THEY DO, THERE WILL BE NOTHING LAFAYETTE CANNOT DO.

ULTIMATELY, WE CAN CONTINUE TO BE A THRIVING, LEADING COMMUNITY IN THE STATE, AND YES EVEN IN THE NATION, IF WE DO AS RAGIN CAGUNS' HEAD COACH MARK HUDSPETH TEACHES HIS PLAYERS.

THAT IS, ALL PULL IN THE SAME DIRECTION.

THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE HAVE TO AGREE ON EVERY DETAIL OF HOW WE GET TO WHERE WE WANT TO BE, BUT WE DO NEED TO AGREE THAT WE ARE STRIVING FOR THE SAME GOAL.

I HAVE PREACHED ONE GOAL SINCE YOU HONORED ME WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADING THIS GREAT CITY AND PARISH, OVER NINE YEARS AGO.

THAT GOAL IS SIMPLY TO MAKE LAFAYETTE THE BEST PLACE TO LIVE AND RAISE A FAMILY IN AMERICA. IF THAT IS NOT YOUR GOAL, PLEASE STEP ASIDE; YOU'RE WASTING OUR TIME AND I HAVE LESS THAN THREE YEARS LEFT, SO I AM A LITTLE IMPATIENT.

IF WE CONTINUE TO MAKE LAFAYETTE THAT PLACE THAT PEOPLE WANT TO RAISE THEIR FAMILIES, BECAUSE THEY LIKE OUR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, THEY LIKE THAT OUR GOVERNMENT LEADERS ARE LOOKING TO THE FUTURE AND OUR COMMUNITY IS WILLING TO INVEST IN THAT FUTURE,

THEN I PROMISE YOU THE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WILL COME AND OUR CITIZENS WILL HAVE THE ABILITY TO STAY HOME TO RAISE THEIR FAMILIES IN THE BEST PLACE TO LIVE IN AMERICA.

LET'S KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING!